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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9395  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
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RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 2775  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0598  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0474  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: HIGH-LEVEL ATTENDANCE AT EMBASSY'S IFTAR  
DINNER

REF: ASHGABAT 827

¶1. In contrast to past years, a number of high-level Government of Turkmenistan officials attended the Embassy's Iftar dinner on September 18. About 35 attendees participated, including Deputy Chairman and Foreign Minister Rashit Meredov, Speaker of the Parliament Akja Nurberdiyeva, and the Chairman of the Council on Religious Affairs Charygeldi Seryayev. Many diplomats representing predominantly Muslim countries also attended. Although invited, neither Turkmenistan's current Grand Mufti, Rowshen Allerberdiyev, nor the former Grand Mufti (who was recently pardoned - reftel), Nasrullah ibn Ibadullah, attended. (NOTE: One of the younger muftis at the event told an Embassy FSN that the current Grand Mufti is on a trip to Mecca. END NOTE.)

¶2. Both the Charge and the USAID Religion, State and Society specialist (himself a Muslim) made brief comments about U.S. efforts to reach out to the Muslim World and tolerance for Muslim communities in the United States. Many of the guests remarked how appreciative they were of the Embassy's invitation.

¶3. COMMENT: Government turnout at this year's Embassy-hosted Iftar dinner is a giant improvement over past years. The rank and number of government attendees again highlights sustained support for an improved relationship with the United States. Additionally, the event served as a key program in post's Muslim outreach efforts.

CURRAN